

PUBLIC
EDUCATION
NETWORK

Open to the Public:

The Public

Speaks Out on

No Child Left Behind

A Summary of Nine Hearings

September 2005 – January 2006

About PEN

Public Education Network (PEN) is a national organization of local education funds (LEFs) and individuals working to improve public schools and build citizen support for quality public education in low-income communities across the nation. PEN believes an active, vocal constituency is the key to ensuring that every child, in every community, benefits from a quality public education. PEN and its members are building public demand and mobilizing resources for quality public education on behalf of 11.5 million children in more than 1600 school districts in 34 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. In addition, PEN's international affiliates serve over 7 million children in Mexico, Peru, and the Philippines.

Our Vision

Every day, in every community, every child in America benefits from a quality public education.

Our Mission

To build public demand and mobilize resources for quality public education for all children through a national constituency of local education funds and individuals.

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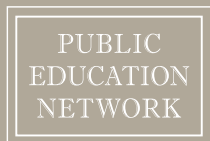
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Public involvement. Public education. Public benefit.

Summary of Testimony & Recommendations from the Public

Open to the Public: The Public Speaks Out on *No Child Left Behind*

Between September 2005 and January 2006, Public Education Network (PEN) held a series of public hearings to give students, parents, and community members – audiences very much affected by the law, but usually left out of the policy debate – an opportunity to tell their side of the NCLB story.

While education organizations and Congress hold forums and hearings to solicit feedback from educators and school administrators about the impact of NCLB, they seldom look beyond schools to see the impact of the law on the public and on communities. But because schools play such a critical role in community life, understanding how the law affects students, families, and the broader community is critically instructive to policymakers and to others who are trying to make sure the law meets its goals.

The hearings serve four purposes: They provide venues through which a public record of the local capacity to implement NCLB can be compiled. They serve as a means to inform and mobilize the public on issues pertaining to public education and what it takes to improve its quality. They give PEN and its national partners the information needed to bring public voices and concerns into the debate about reshaping NCLB. And, finally, they create a public “résumé” for review by policymakers in the context of the law’s reauthorization.



Critical Exposure

WHAT THE PUBLIC SAID

This is the second round of hearings on NCLB PEN has hosted in 10 key states that have large populations of children affected by the law¹. More than 1500 people attended the 2005–2006 hearings, at which approximately 300 parents, students and community members gave testimony. PEN also conducted a second online survey of education advocates. Here is what the public had to say.

The Accountability Imperative

One underlying NCLB premise is that if data about school and district performance is made available, the public and policymakers will act on the data and demand conditions that enable schools to become proficient. What we learned from our hearings and from our online survey is that (a) data alone is not enough; there must be sufficient explanation of the meaning of the data and of its implications for the public to act; and (b) the public has a deeper appreciation and understanding of school and district accountability than can be captured by a single source of data.

The public supports accountability, but believes the current NCLB accountability system is too narrow. It rejects the idea that a single test can create an accurate portrayal of how well a school is performing and believes that such a determination is often at odds with evaluations based on state assessments and inconsistent with how members of the public personally evaluate their schools. They want other, more formative evaluation dimensions included in the determination of school performance.

Shared Responsibility

The public believes that the school is the primary vehicle for increasing student achievement. It does not believe, however, that schools can accomplish this alone, and wants responsibility for school success to be shared across the community. Indeed, hearing participants are convinced that engaging the broader community is crucial to school success. These sentiments are echoed in a recently released poll by the Carnegie Corporation of New York in which 83 percent of Americans said that community members and organizations should share responsibility for reforming or improving urban public high schools, and that struggling schools cannot improve without active and sustained community involvement.² Annual polls by Public Education Network in partnership with *Education Week* have reported similar findings.³

The more NCLB fails to respond to these threshold views, the more community leaders, parents, and students will continue to believe that the law does not address their concept of accountability and, thus, the greater the backlash against it. If NCLB is to meet its goals, this “accountability gap” must be closed.

Communities Abandon Schools

Labeling schools “in need of improvement,” typically interpreted as “failing,” creates conditions whereby schools are abandoned by some students – often the highest performing students; by teachers who transfer to other schools; and by communities unsure of their responsibility for schools most in need of support.

Rather than viewing a school in need of improvement as an opportunity to rally community support and elicit strategies for ways students in that school can be better served, such labeling initiates blame-games and finger-pointing at whichever group caused the school to “fail.”

This destructive impact goes well beyond the school; it tears at the fabric of community. When a district or school receives a low grade, said an Ohio student, “it reflects on the community. Who wants to attend a failing school? Better yet, what parent wants to live in a community where the schools are failing?”

Communities are willing to help, but they are not being asked to do what is necessary to support their schools. While some hope can be found in testimony at several hearing sites that told of low-performing schools being turned around

¹ The first set of hearings, conducted in 2004, resulted in the report *Open to the Public: Speaking Out on “No Child Left Behind”* (Public Education Network ed., 2005). Available at http://www.publiceducation.org/portals/nclb/hearings/national/Open_to_the_Public.asp.

² Carnegie Corporation poll for *Schools for a New Society* initiative, Jan. 2006. <http://www.carnegie.org/sub/news/onehighschool.html> (press release)

³ PEN polls conducted between 2001 and 2004: *Action for All: The Public’s Responsibility for Public Education* (April 2001); *Accountability for All: What Voters Want from Education Candidates* (April 2002); *Demanding Quality Public Education in Tough Economic Times* (2003); *Learn. Vote. Act.* (March 2004) http://www.publiceducation.org/pubs_nationalpolls.asp

by community support or by intensive support from the business community, the practice of focusing on scores of low-performing students skews the public's perception of a school and weakens the community within and around the school.

Students Feel the Brunt

The strong emphasis on a single high-stakes test puts enormous pressure on teachers and principals that is passed on to students, causing them deep anxiety. At a minimum, this is counterproductive. At its most extreme, it is severely debilitating and is even causing students to drop out of school.

The strong focus on testing has significantly narrowed the curriculum, at the expense of course work and outside activities that many parents believe are necessary to prepare their children for the real world after high school. The Center on Education Policy recently reported that 71 percent of the nation's school districts have reduced the hours dedicated to other subjects to focus on reading and math.⁴ This is particularly problematic for poor students who are most in need of an enriched learning environment, and whose teachers are often the least equipped to adopt new creative teaching strategies. Finally, the premature inclusion of English language learners and some special education students in regular testing programs is unfair to them and to the schools they attend.

Inadequate Academic Supports Offer False Promises

The resource inequity among schools is visible to students and families in both wealthy schools and poor schools. This inequity can be seen within the schools and in the range of community supports available to students. It reveals a fundamental unfairness in the accountability system and in the sanctions prescribed by the law. Many hearing participants were adamant that increasing expectations without increasing resources is a recipe for failure. And they were equally firm in suggesting that resources need to be strategically positioned, and that funds must be allocated more fairly to meet the learning needs of students.

For most parents and students in low-performing schools, the option to transfer to a better-performing school is not working. Families don't want to transfer their kids to other schools; they want their local schools to get the resources they need to be effective. Many parents see the transfer provision as a false promise, and the transfer option as a last resort.

Supplemental educational services (SES) or tutoring remain uneven in terms of availability, and in terms of program and personnel quality. Such services are often not provided as advertised, are not aligned with the in school curriculum, and are not available to all who are eligible. In some districts, eligible parents and students are not requesting services because districts often fail to notify parents in a timely manner or give parents sufficient time to make decisions about services. Current financial incentives do not encourage districts to aggressively promote supplemental services.

Information Is Not Getting Out

Four years after the passage of NCLB, parents are still not receiving the information to which they are entitled under the law in a clear, sufficient, or timely manner. They need this information – which includes data about school performance, and the availability and quality of supplemental educational services – to make sound educational choices for their children. Yet, even when data is reported, it is often reported without explanation or interpretation. Students do not understand the purpose of the assessments they are being asked to take, and neither do their parents. Until they do, they will not support accountability measures and the sanctions linked to them.

Parent & Community Involvement Provisions Not Implemented

Teachers, principals, and district personnel do not have the capacity, nor are they being given the training, to engage parents or community members. Parents are not being informed about their rights, roles, and responsibilities. They are not being given the orientation or training necessary to participate in a meaningful way, and schools are not implementing the school compact requirements of the law. When parents do seek to participate, they are frequently denied any meaningful role in decision-making or governance, are turned away at the schoolhouse door, or are engaged in a token fashion.

⁴ "From the Capital to the Classroom: Year Four of the *No Child Left Behind Act*," Center on Education Policy, March 28, 2006. <http://www.cep-dc.org/>

Community members also remain uninformed about NCLB provisions. Though the law states that community representatives should serve on committees or be consulted, community members are typically not aware of these opportunities. Many schools lose a major opportunity for improvement by not involving community members on school improvement teams in any meaningful way.

Lack of Capacity

Much of the failure to implement provisions of the law, to engage parents and community members, and to provide information in a timely, understandable manner is due to the lack of capacity at the district and state level.

Teacher Certification Is Not Enough

Students across the country see a significant disconnect between teachers who are deemed “highly qualified” according to state licensing requirements, and teachers who are able to engage students in the learning process and reach students with a variety of learning styles and needs in a culturally sensitive manner. Students, parents, and community members are concerned not only about teacher “qualifications”; they are concerned about the “qualities” that teachers bring into the classroom, and about the significant need for highly qualified teachers in low-performing schools.

THE PUBLIC RECOMMENDS

Despite these shortcomings, the law represents a critical milestone in federal responsibility for public education. Implementation of NCLB continues to raise issues that can lead to a quality public education for all children, and provokes the public and policymakers to try to address those issues. In testimony and in the survey, we did hear positive things about NCLB, primarily with respect to its goals. But for the law to succeed in reaching these goals, some drastic adjustments to the law and its implementation are necessary. Here are some changes the public would like to see, along with recommendations for how they might be achieved.

Community Resources – A Support & Prevention Strategy

The public says that schools need full community support and collaboration in order for students to be successful. Schools cannot do their job alone. Yet many schools are completely isolated from “helping” institutions in their communities. If we can reduce this isolation, we can expand supports for students and families, and expand accountability for student success across the community. Closer connections among schools and community agencies, such as those found in community schools, are critical. These helping institutions also need to increase their capacity to address the needs of students and their families, who are, in many cases, the same constituents these agencies were created to serve.

When a school is identified as needing improvement, there should be resources directed to that school and a mandated set of strategies and interventions, not just punitive sanctions, to improve the school and to address issues such as the lack of information, the lack of capacity, the lack of parent and community involvement, the need for better academic and nonacademic supports, the inadequacies of the current SES system, and the virtual abandonment of designated schools.

Coordination among agencies, perhaps through required interagency cooperative agreements starting at the federal level, would bring health and social service agencies into alignment with student needs, with the school serving as a community anchor to improve service provision to students and families. Community-based organizations, such as local education funds, are uniquely positioned to broker and facilitate relationships among community agencies, and engage the public to develop a strategic plan addressing the needs of students, families, schools, and the community.

This approach can be used as a prevention strategy as well as a remedy for low-performing schools. This is an appropriate intervention not only for schools showing early signs of needing assistance, but for schools that are high performers as well. Research shows that in community school settings, where schools and community agencies

⁵ Blank, M.J., Melville, A., & Shah, B.P. (2003, May). *Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools*. Washington, DC: Coalition for Community Schools, Institute for Educational Leadership. Available at <http://www.communityschools.org/mtdhomepage.html>

and organizations work in partnership to remove barriers to learning and to mobilize community assets to support student success, academic performance and other important measures improve. Community schools typically include health, mental health, and social services; mentoring, a safe environment for tutoring and after-school enrichment opportunities connected to the school day curriculum; service learning and parent and community involvement in schools.⁵ To encourage adaptation of this strategy, financial incentives and technical assistance should be offered. The community should help determine what services will be provided and ensure that ongoing evaluation of the programs is conducted.

Accountability That Produces Student Outcomes

The public clearly wants to reduce the emphasis on a single test as the sole determining factor of adequate yearly progress (AYP). Suggestions for alternatives include establishing a value-added assessment system that works in tandem with the current NCLB reporting system and gives credit for significant progress, and allowing districts to include a local academic progress measure, in addition to the NCLB required assessment systems, in determining progress toward AYP. The public also wants greater attention paid to communicating the implications of NCLB's federal accountability system and, when there is a state accountability system in place that is independent of the NCLB system, to interpreting and explaining the discrepancies between them. The public also urges that special consideration be given to English language learners and special education students.

Improved Academic Supports for Students

To genuinely improve the educational opportunities for students under the law, parents want the option to select supplemental education services before transferring their children to another public school. They want accurate and timely information on SES in jargon-free English and in alternative home languages as needed. Increased monitoring and an independent evaluation of SES providers are also needed to assure that services are of high quality, are tied to the school curriculum and state standards, provide feedback to both parents and teachers, increase achievement, and are delivered as advertised. Evaluation results should be widely publicized so that parents can make informed decisions. SES staff should be "highly qualified" and the eligibility of SES providers should be approved by both the school district and the state education agency.

An Expanded Definition of "Highly Qualified" Teachers

Students and parents want the definition of "highly qualified" teachers to be broadened beyond existing state requirements to include the criteria that students and parents described at the hearings. Pre-service and in-service teacher education requirements should include course work on parent and community involvement, cultural competency, and using data to improve instruction. Incentives – such as professional compensation, tax credits, assistance with home purchases, and loan forgiveness – to attract and retain high-performing teachers in low-performing schools should be implemented.

Enforced Parent Involvement Provisions

Parents want NCLB's existing parent involvement provisions to be implemented, specifically the "parents' right to know" provisions at state, district, and school levels such as parent compact, parent policies, and parental notifications. Orientation and training is needed so that parents can participate in more meaningful ways, and training for school and district officials is needed so they can more effectively engage parents. A complaint procedure mechanism should be added for parents who contend that their school district is not complying with the law's requirements.

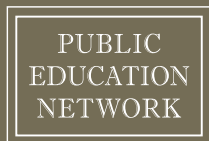
The Public Has a Key Role to Play

Members of the public very much appreciated the opportunity to speak out about NCLB, especially since their opinions are not often sought. In considering amendments to the law, policymakers should solicit views from students, parents, and community members in order to obtain a full picture of the true impact of the law beyond the schoolhouse doors. The reauthorization process is an opportunity for the public to tell Congress what it wants in an accountability system, not just give its views on NCLB. By making the reauthorization transparent and listening to the

voices of those most affected by accountability, Congress can go a long way toward ensuring that the goals of NCLB will be met and that the public will support the process.

CONCLUSION

After two rounds of NCLB hearings, the public debate about issues raised by the implementation of NCLB is more intense than ever. As greater numbers of schools are labeled “in need of improvement,” reliance on a single test to make this determination seems inappropriate and unfair to the public, especially when resources are scarce and not evenly distributed. With greater numbers of teachers being deemed unqualified, feelings about what counts as a highly qualified teacher have intensified, as has the public’s belief in the community as a true partner in school success. As policymakers consider changes to the law at the federal level, or in implementation strategies at the local level, such partnerships can and should be part of a strategy to ensure that every child has a quality public education.



Public involvement. Public education. Public benefit.

Open to the Public: The Public Speaks Out on *No Child Left Behind* NATIONAL REPORT

*Schools should be
held accountable...but
we must do so in a
meaningful way.*

Christine Stillwell
Parent Advocacy Organizer
Orlando, FL

Given the wide disparities in the quality of public education in America, the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act of 2001 was greeted by many as necessary and long overdue. But the public wants policymakers to know that it opposes many of the consequences of the law and disagrees with the way it is being implemented.

This overarching theme permeated public hearings on NCLB organized by Public Education Network (PEN) and local partners in major cities across the country. PEN is a national association of local education funds and individuals working to advance public school reform in low-income communities across the country. With support from national and local foundations, PEN held two rounds of hearings in 10 states over an 18-month period to give students, parents, and community leaders an opportunity to talk about their experiences with this far-reaching law that has rewritten education policy in America. This report covers testimony given in New York, Massachusetts, Illinois, Texas, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Florida, and California during the second round of hearings¹.

Hearing testimony reveals a public that is hopeful and frustrated, supportive and critical; a public trying to align personal values with the law's public priorities in a way that makes sense. While NCLB earns praise for focusing attention on giving all students an opportunity to succeed academically, the public sees its provisions as so inadequate that they undermine the law's well-intentioned goals. Indeed, as familiarity with the law and its principal tool, test-based accountability, has increased so, too, have misgivings about this strategy.

Test-based accountability has, in fact, turned out to be a double-edged sword. Advanced students see it as detrimental in that it cuts down on the breadth and depth of content they want in their classes. And struggling students, particularly those who are low-income and minority, see it as a make-or-break factor that may determine whether they will remain in school.

The public strongly believes in the value and importance of education and often seeks solutions beyond the dictates of the law. For example, NCLB's definition of highly qualified teachers – those who meet the law's credentialing criteria – falls far short of what students and adults alike believe makes for a successful teacher. And, while accountability measures may tell how schools are performing, they cannot guarantee that schools, districts, or states will respond with effective interventions. Furthermore, it is obvious that terribly distressed schools need full community support and collaboration to be able to teach successfully. They cannot do it alone.

One finding that emerged from the hearings transcends any principle, law, or regulation: students, who have been taught by teachers with low expectations – as do the parents of these students – consistently underestimate what is needed to make sure that education does, in fact, lead to a better life. Public officials also underestimate what it takes to move low-performing schools into higher levels of performance. From testimony given at the hearings, there is little evidence that low-performing schools are getting more experienced

¹ The first set of hearings, conducted in 2004, resulted in the report *OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: SPEAKING OUT ON "NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND"* (Public Education Network ed., 2005). Available at http://www.publiceducation.org/portals/nclb/hearings/national/Open_to_the_Public.asp.

In my deepest, darkest moments, I wonder what is going to be different. We have been doing this work for 20 years. We know what makes a difference. What's the problem?

Linda Gerstle, Director
Atlas Communities
Cambridge, MA

I want to make it really clear that I'm not opposed to accountability, but I'm opposed to accountability when there are a lack of resources and a lack of funding and a lack of clarification on what it means to this community.

Wayne Ho, Executive Director
Coalition for Asian American
Children and Families
New York, NY

teachers, more support for students and their families, or more access to the expertise they need. Mutual effort and mutual trust are essential if poor and minority children are to have access to equal opportunities for quality education in this country.

The Public's Voice

The PEN hearings were set up to compensate for the lack of public involvement in the shaping of NCLB. The law may have brought a new era of accountability to public education, commented Chad Wick, president of KnowledgeWorks Foundation, the Ohio hearing co-sponsor, "but true accountability has to reach beyond results of tests, report card scores, and state sanctions. Missing from this important debate are the voices of parents and youth and other members of the public, particularly those from communities most affected by this law."

Wendy Puriefey, president of PEN, similarly contends that public voices deserve to be at the policy table. When NCLB became law, PEN decided it was important to hear from those whose voices are typically not sought out by policymakers – ordinary citizens, students, and parents – "the people who care about and make public education what it really is."

Testimony from students was given special emphasis at every hearing, particularly since they are the ones most directly affected by changes in schools and by NCLB's provisions. Students from all kinds of public schools – low-income urban to affluent suburban – used the hearings to decry the lack of equal opportunities to learn. PEN also reached out to the broader community in all 50 states through an online survey on NCLB, which was posted on the organization's website, www.GiveKidsGoodSchools.org. See Appendix A.

Each hearing brought to light situations unique to the state in which the hearing took place – especially in regard to accountability systems and funding inequities – but strong, consistent themes emerged across all hearings.

■ The implementation of test-based accountability – in place in every state but one (Iowa) prior to the passage of NCLB – intensified in reaction to the punitive consequences that are part of NCLB. Furthermore, because accountability systems are being so poorly implemented, the public is rejecting the worth of such assessments and is very upset about the narrowing effect on curriculum, teaching and learning.

- While all students are affected by the change in classroom priorities, students in low-performing schools are the ones mostly likely to be deprived of rich instruction.
- Differences in measurement and reporting criteria between state accountability systems and those required by NCLB are confusing the public.
- NCLB mandates that students with disabilities be assessed with the same grade-level tests as other students, and that English-language learners (ELL) be assessed after only one year of English instruction, are seen as unfair, unwarranted, and counterproductive.
- Focusing on test scores as a way to prevent punitive action demoralizes teachers and points to a critical need for strong instructional leadership in schools and districts.



- Students and parents value qualities in teachers that the NCLB definitions do not address.
- Parents and community leaders want resources and efforts to focus on improving local schools, not transferring kids to schools outside the community. The supports needed to turn schools around – such as community collaboration across agencies and services and/or private resources – are rarely utilized. Witnesses insisted that stable communities and families are at the heart of improving student performance, yet NCLB fosters policies that perpetuate the isolation of schools from their communities.
- Communication about NCLB breaks down at several levels. Parents do not receive adequate information about their rights and choices under NCLB, and school reports are not readily understood by parents – a problem both of clarity and translation into home languages. Moreover, students often do not understand how testing relates to accountability, or how the underlying rationale of NCLB and its provisions relate to their education.
- States and school districts lack the capacity and/or the will to monitor NCLB requirements. Assuring the quality of supplementary educational services (SES) and soliciting the active involvement of parents in meaningful policy decisions are just two areas that are not being enforced.
- Funding levels are insufficient to assure that all students have the resources needed to succeed. But decisions made at state and district levels, more so than any federal policies, are in large part responsible for the unequal distribution of experienced teachers, poor facilities/resources in low-income schools, and inadequate communications.

Test-Based Accountability: Failure of a Promising Reform

Unless the quality, processes, and reporting of test-based accountability improves, support for the ambitious goals of NCLB is likely to disintegrate even further. At every hearing, youth and adult witnesses alike revealed their frustration, sometimes to the point of anguish, about the current impact of the accountability policies. They all want accountability. But they also want a better system for achieving it.

All states, with the exception of Iowa, use state assessments to hold schools and students accountable for achieving certain standards. States had worked out measurement systems to satisfy previous federal requirements under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. NCLB, which reauthorized this 36-year-old law, introduced tougher accountability provisions and stringent standards to move all students toward the proficient level by 2014. But its punitive impositions – such as the labeling of schools as “needing improvement” and the eventual “reconstitution” of schools – have radically changed the testing environment, according to testimony given at the PEN hearings.

It is significant that Texas, the state with the longest experience in implementing the kind of test-based accountability embodied in NCLB, was the site of the hearing that produced the most anguished testimony about its effects. According to those witnesses, Texas parents and teachers are giving up on the public education system because of the impact of testing

on teaching and learning. But witnesses at all hearings had objections to the testing environment as summarized below.

- The pressure to avoid sanctions causes teachers and administrators to narrow the curriculum to subjects that are tested, devote an inordinate amount of time to test preparation, and use only instructional strategies that are thought to boost test scores. A California teacher, certified as exemplary by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, said he was forced to drop his enrichment strategies and focus on the test. “All I do is hand out ditto sheets,” he said. Even students enrolled in high-performing schools or taking advanced classes said they were practicing test techniques instead of studying English literature. Laws do not empower students, said a Columbus, OH, student. Teachers do—if “they are free to be creative and rigorous as opposed to drilling us to pass a test that has no bearing on my ability,” said Lakita Williams of the Brookhaven Leadership Institute.
- Students in schools labeled “needing improvement” feel the most pressure and experience the worst narrow, drill-based curriculum. A Pennsylvania student in such a school said students felt discouraged about real learning because teachers were more interested in “threatening” students than in teaching them. Eric Mar, past president of the San Francisco school board, told the hearing panel in his city that, even though the purpose of NCLB and state mandates is to raise achievement, “the law is doing just the opposite for the vast majority of low-income children of color...”
- The pressure imposed by NCLB’s accountability mandates is limiting course offerings, especially in regard to occupational classes, and is resulting in “pushouts” and dropouts. These largely anecdotal findings were mentioned so frequently, in so many places, that they deserve to be addressed.
- Students and parents were aware of the inequities in resources that affect student test scores. Those from the inner city told of broken computers, unheated and overcrowded classrooms, shredded and outdated textbooks, and no science laboratories. Students from high-performing schools were “shocked” at the lack of access to Advanced Placement classes in low-income schools. One Boston student took the absence of basic resources as a personal insult: “I don’t feel as if I’m wanted. Just because I go to a public school doesn’t mean they can’t fix the toilets.”
- The AYP system does not take into consideration even significant progress toward meeting improvement goals. If NCLB benchmarks are not reached, no amount of improvement can put the school in compliance with AYP.
- Labeling schools that do not meet AYP goals demoralizes students and teachers, causes the schools to lose community support, and does not guarantee interventions based on best-practices research. Nonetheless, there were reports of some communities that rallied around schools threatened with sanctions because of low test scores.
- The public receives information on test scores and school performances from different sources. In most instances, this information is generated by state accountability systems, though they also receive the federal calculation based on the percentage of students moving toward the proficient level. The two systems often do not mesh, causing great confusion.

Testing, which is an excellent evaluation tool, has been so misused and overused that it is losing its effectiveness. Testing is used to scare parents, students and teachers into submitting to the whim of the ‘powers that be’ and not used to improve student learning.

PEN online survey comment

The NCLB mandate to include children with disabilities and English-language learners in regular testing programs is seen as unfair and unwise. One of the country's leading legal advocates for children with disabilities, testifying in Boston, faulted Massachusetts for severely limiting the use of alternative assessments with students whose disabilities hamper their performance. Children with special needs, said a school board member from Florida, "are their own worst enemy." One-size-fits-all testing demoralizes them.

Similarly, witnesses said that testing requirements were contributing to the dropout problem among English learners. Wayne Ho, executive director of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families in New York, challenged the hearing officers to study Chinese for one year, then make a passing grade on a content test required for graduation in that language. A bilingual education leader in Texas said the requirement to test ELL students has caused school districts "to implement very, very poor hurry-up-and-learn-English classes." Texas had experience with immersion programs up until the 1970s, commented Elena Izquierdo, vice president of the Texas Association for Bilingual Education, "and our Hispanic graduation rate was about ten percent."

Students offered a number of alternatives to current assessment practices: greater reliance on portfolios or other ways of demonstrating student work, differentiated assessments for students with disabilities or limited-English proficiency, use of grade-point averages, and end-of-course exams rather than high school exit exams. They pointed out that exit exams often ask for discrete facts that were covered in classes taken two to three years ago. Adults favored using testing for diagnostic rather than punitive purposes and/or using a value-added/progress model rather than the static goal model of NCLB. Several witnesses criticized using the same grade-level tests for children with disabilities, especially if there are no accommodations, and testing English-language learners on English skills before they have had time to learn the language.

The Effect of NCLB on Teachers & Teaching Quality

No resource, no intervention, no reform counts as much as the quality of teaching. While they agree with the NCLB dictum that teachers should know the content they teach, students and parents view the issue of teacher quality quite differently from the official NCLB definition of "highly qualified" as a teacher who has earned the proper credentials and met state requirements such as passing a content test.

For students, these qualifications do not mean much unless teachers also know how to make the content interesting and relevant. Jerusha Clark, a Dayton Early College Academy student, testified that he would want to know whether his teacher is "a teacher who reads a textbook or are you a teacher who can tell me how this concept applies in other areas of life....Can you explain to me why I'm learning this?" Students enrolled in high-performing schools or those taking advanced classes told of teachers who set very high expectations, helped them prepare for college, supported them in their school activities, and, who, as a Pennsylvania suburban student explained, "after parents, are the most important influence on us." Their biggest complaint was that such teachers had less time for creative teaching because of test prep.

Students in low-performing and/or low-income schools, however, just wished there were "more teachers who care about us." Students in these schools are

The business people I've talked to don't want to hire test takers. They want people who have a work ethic. They want people to show up on time with the basic skills necessary to do the job. They want creative people. They want problem solvers. They want people who can work in teams, and they want lifelong learners.

Gary Williams, Outreach Director
Washington State Community College
Marietta, Ohio

quick to observe that “some teachers just want their paychecks” and, in several instances, ruefully explained how they lost caring, inspiring teachers because those teachers lacked certification. For students in low-income neighborhoods where adult mentors are scarce, teachers are critical to keeping them engaged and preventing them from dropping out, as one Philadelphia student explained: “In my school, a lot of our students don’t graduate. A lot of our students don’t meet the requirements, and it’s because they don’t have the drive and desire to succeed and to learn. That falls under the teacher’s responsibility because a lot of our teachers aren’t showing that they care for us.”

Caring does not mean pampering, according to student testimony. They want teachers who will use strategies and take time to be sure students understand the material. It is not a matter of what degrees teachers have, said Chicago student Maria Salgado, “but what connection they have with the students and their ability to form a partnership with them.”

For many urban witnesses, adults as well as students, the most vital element missing from NCLB’s definition of “highly qualified” is what many described as “cultural competence.” The achievement gap will not close, asserted a Detroit witness, unless the cultural “fit” between teachers and students is addressed. Students in Boston emotionally accused teachers of using insulting language toward them, but a Detroit student was more plaintive about the issue: “A qualified teacher is someone who has been in the place you’ve been....” A Bay Area high school student said “highly qualified” meant nothing if a teacher has “a phobia of the neighborhood, or the predominant population, or even the culture.”

Witnesses offered few solutions to the problem of “disengaged” teachers. Those who addressed the issue wanted more teacher professional development focused on teaching in culturally diverse schools. Some reported that teacher preparation and professional development were now focused on test-based instruction. If skillful teaching is the goal, then NCLB may be administering a self-inflicted injury since testimony at several hearings indicated that the most creative teachers are being “driven out” of the public schools by the emphasis on raising test scores.

Of those who responded to the online survey, only one-quarter believed schools would be able to meet the NCLB requirement to have a qualified teacher in every content area by the end of the 2005–2006 school year. Testimony in California underscored this skepticism. Witnesses cited studies estimating that 10 percent (approximately 30,000) of the teachers in the state are teaching out of field; in the sciences, the estimate ranges from 25 to 35 percent. Even more alarming, it is estimated that 50 percent of the science teachers in urban districts may be unqualified. Moreover, the middle school science curriculum in California is multi-disciplinary, thus requiring teachers for those grades to obtain certification in three to five content areas during a time when professional development monies have dried up, said one witness.

NCLB, Parents & Communities

Three related issues about the role of parents and communities, and the proper implementation of the law, have emerged: the ability of parents to make decisions for their children under SES and transfer provisions; the ability of parents and other community members to help improve schools based on school performance information; and, finally, the unintended consequences

*You’re testing teachers’
knowledge of a subject,
but you also need to
make sure they know
about the students.*

Leslye Lugo
San Francisco high school student

of “labeling,” and the need for community support to remedy the isolation of schools and address the needs of students.

Transfer & SES

NCLB mentions parent involvement literally hundreds of times and parent empowerment is the basis of the law’s two major interventions. Parents can request the transfer of their children from a consistently low-performing school to a high-performing one; they can request supplemental educational services, primarily after-school tutoring, for their children; and they can select the provider of these services.

According to hearing testimony, however, the transfer option is not being used very often, nor is it what parents want. Furthermore, communication about and quality of supplemental educational services has not met expectations. Very few witnesses even brought up the transfer option. Those who did, criticized it for diverting resources that should be available to help struggling schools. One Massachusetts witness said 5,000 parents in her district were notified that they were eligible to ask for transfers, but only two schools were qualified to accept transfers. It cost one Florida county \$1.8 million to provide SES and, since this money came out of Title I funds, it left many schools facing a reduction in Title I services. In addition, it is the more proficient students who are taking advantage of transfer and SES options. Joie Cadle, a member of the Orange County School Board, in noting that transfers increased the problem of mobility and overcrowding, commented: “We need to be able to work with children at their neighborhood schools. That’s where their base is, that’s where their friends are, that’s where their parents’ support networks are. When we start moving children and they ride forty-five minutes on a bus to a school, the likelihood that they’re going to get involved in any remediation after school does not exist because the bus only goes once and we have to use our buses three times a day. So, keep them in their home schools, allow us to give them the remediation they need and allow their parent network to stay there for them.”

According to Chicago parent advocate Julie Woestehoff, parents in her city endorse support for floundering schools. “The parents who call us,” she said, “are sending the federal government a clear message: ‘Don’t tell me to move my child to another school – help me make my child’s school better.’”

SES was more popular, but parents and community members believe school districts either lack the capacity or are unwilling to provide the information they need to make appropriate decisions regarding SES. Witnesses said the information was not available, or was incomprehensible, or needed to be translated into home languages. Furthermore, there appears to be no entity that is monitoring the provision or quality of supplemental educational services (SES), or even the notification of parents about their availability. Both parents and SES providers blame districts for a communications gap. Parents report that they often receive information about the opportunity to enroll their child in SES just as the deadline is about to pass; in addition, the information is not written clearly, and is not translated into home languages. When parents do receive information about what different providers have to offer, it is often inaccurate and students do not receive services as they were described. On the flip side, SES providers in Michigan said some parents made little effort to become aware; 40 providers came to a meeting to describe their programs, but only two parents showed up. Parents may not understand the SES application process, said Dorene Smith Bey, afterschool consultant and



Critical Exposure

member of the Detroit Parent Network, but the district also engages in “game playing” to prevent students from benefiting from these services.

Availability of Information

NCLB is based on the principle that parents will be able to make good decisions and demand improvements if they have reliable information. Testimony given at the hearings makes it clear that school officials have a communications problem, and it starts with the very basis of NCLB, namely, test-based accountability. Students testified that they were never told the reasons for testing or the rationale behind the law. Several reported doing research on their own and reaching conclusions that were almost always negative. Citing the denseness of the language, one student wondered if those who voted for the law had ever read it. When parents and others received information about the status of schools or their choices under the law, it was most often in language that was inaccessible. Said Gamal Mack, a county PTA member: “You’re talking way over our heads a lot of the time when you talk about studies and data and so on....You can take all the data you want, you can throw it at us all you want, but if we don’t understand it, it is useless data.”

This raises significant issues about requirements under NCLB to provide parents with information on issues such as the qualifications of their children’s teachers and the performance of their schools and districts. It also raises issues on how to get parents involved in addressing the needs of low-performing schools, as required by NCLB. At best, school officials do not know how to communicate effectively with parents and they give this NCLB requirement a low priority. At worst, district officials deliberately withhold information and are hostile to parent involvement. In Oakland, parents and parent organizers had to threaten school officials before they were allowed to become involved in the planning process for schools that were being reconstituted, even though their participation is guaranteed by the law. Parents with the most difficulty in this arena are those whose children have disabilities and those whose children are English-language learners. The problem is not with the law, said a Boston parent advocate, but with poor implementation of the law at all levels.

Community Support

One issue NCLB does not address, but witnesses considered critical, is the impact of the law on the strength and sense of community around low-performing schools. In fact, one unintended consequence of the law is its potential to weaken community building within and around schools. AYP calculations, for example, have led to the scapegoating of certain sub-groups of students. The focus on test scores has also undermined highly successful partnerships between teachers and parents according to testimony in Texas.

Students testified about the effect of attending a school labeled “in need of improvement,” a term witnesses said could only be translated as “failing.” As Heather Loomis, a Columbus high school student said, when a district or school receives a low grade “it reflects on the community. Who wants to attend a failing school? Better yet, what parent wants to live in a community where the schools are failing?”

Witnesses protested NCLB sanctions that demoralize community support for schools because they believe that families and communities are essential to achieving the goals of NCLB. The law, many testified, should encourage families to take responsibility for the quality of education and should help

If our schools are viewed as community assets regardless of their performance...and are viewed as those that need help instead of those that need to be closed, I think we can impact the schools to help them turn the corner to achieve the progress that we hope they will achieve.

Eddie Harrell, Executive Director,
Project GRAD
Columbus, Ohio

them develop the leadership skills needed to do so. There was some hopeful testimony at several hearings that described how low-performing schools had been “turned around” by a marshaling of community support or by intensive support from the business community. In order for schools to do their job effectively, they cannot work alone. Indeed, the public called for schools to share responsibility for student success with community agencies and partner organizations. This will require increased capacity on the part of the school districts and the partnering organizations, but these arrangements are critical for meeting the needs of students and their families.

Conclusion

Since PEN’s first round of NCLB hearings, the public’s views on NCLB have intensified. The public agrees more strongly with the need for accountability and sees the role for testing in that context. Yet, as ever greater numbers of schools are being labeled “in need of improvement,” the public believes more deeply that reliance on a single test to make this determination is inappropriate and unfair, especially when resources are scarce and not evenly distributed.

Feelings about what constitutes a “highly qualified” teacher have intensified. As parents and students see teachers – whom they perceive as competent and capable – being dismissed for lack of requisite certification, and other teachers – whom they perceive as disengaged – being retained, they question the validity of the paper credential as the sole determinant of what constitutes “highly qualified.”

The public’s belief in the community as a true partner in school success has also intensified. The public is certain that schools cannot go it alone, that communities must be key partners, and that responsibility and accountability for student success must be shared.

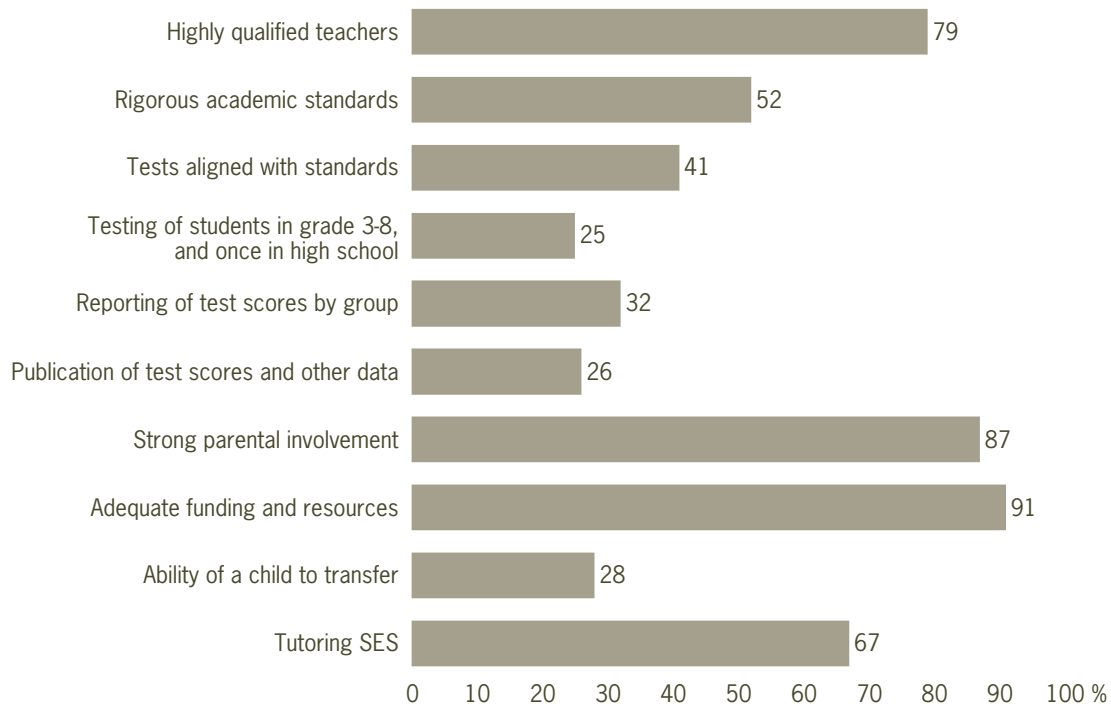
Most importantly, the public has a perspective on the benefits and challenges of NCLB that is not often heard. Community members, students, and parents have the potential to make or break the successful implementation of NCLB, and their views must be considered.

Appendix A: PEN 2005 NCLB Online Survey

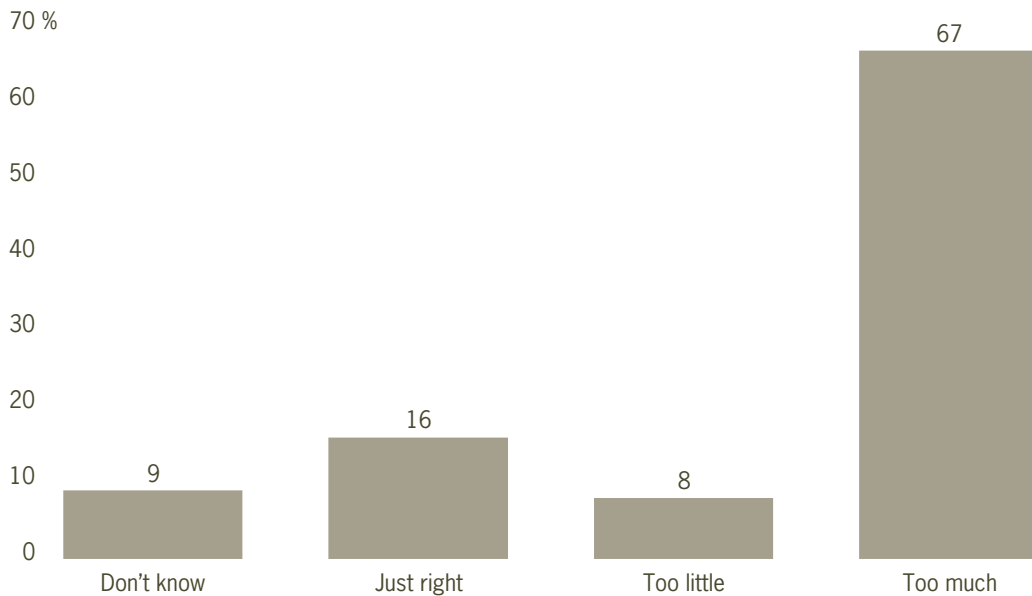
From September through December 31, 2005, Public Education Network conducted a survey on various aspects of *No Child Left Behind* through GiveKidsGoodSchools.org, its e-advocacy website. The online survey garnered 8,000 responses from education advocates around the country who joined in this vibrant and vital national debate on public education.

Highlights of the survey follow; a full copy of the survey is available from Public Education Network.

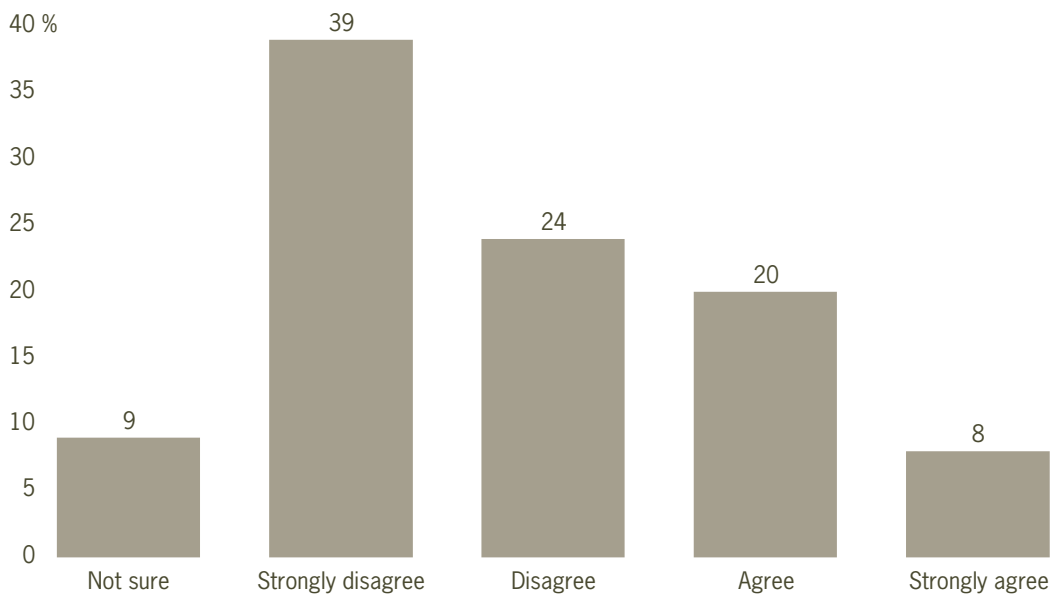
One of the major goals of NCLB is to close the achievement gap among children of different racial, ethnic, and economic groups. Select those provisions of the law that are essential in closing the gap.



NCLB currently requires that all children in grades 3 through 8, plus one grade level in high school, be tested in reading and math. Does NCLB require too much testing, too little, or just right?



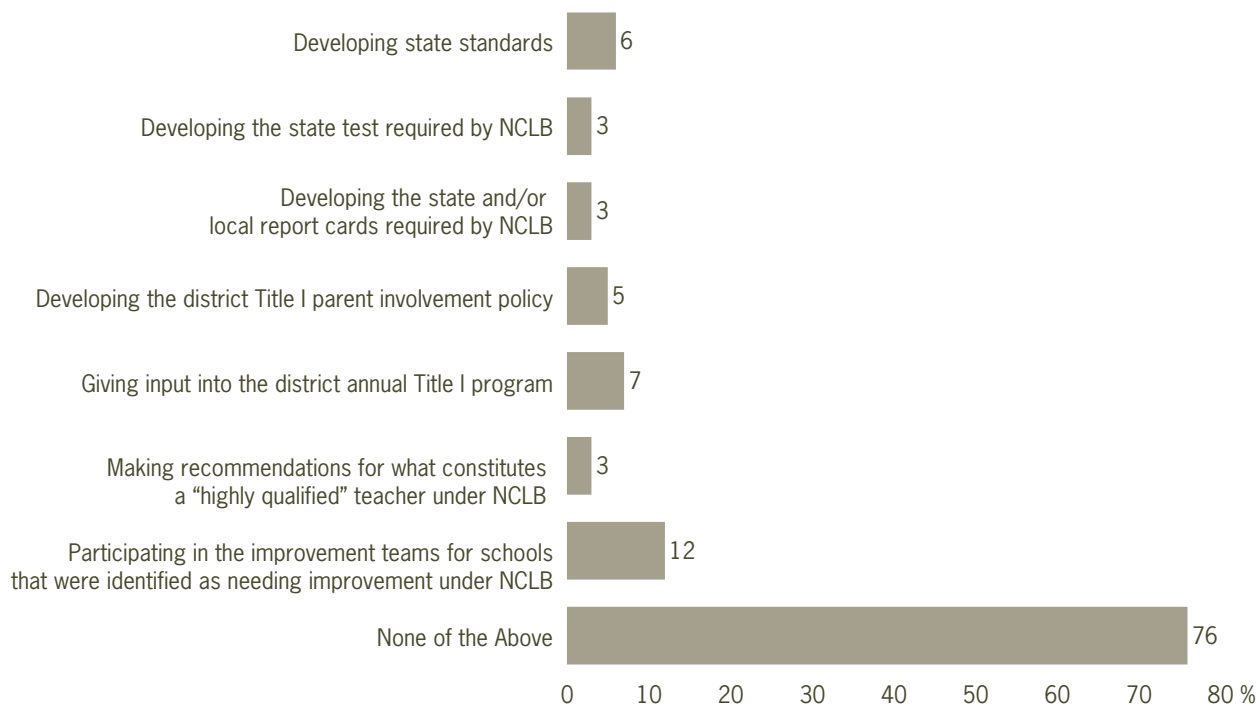
Currently, NCLB requires testing at only one grade level in high school. There are proposals to have NCLB testing in high school in reading, science and math, and at every grade level. Do you agree that there should be additional NCLB testing in high school?



Currently, states have different definitions of what it means to be a “highly qualified teacher.” In judging whether a teacher is highly qualified, which of the following qualities do you believe to be most important? (For each, indicate a number between 1 and 5, with 1 for “least important” and 5 for “most important.”)

	1	2	3	4	5
Knows the subject matter	3%	1%	5%	20%	73%
Knows how to communicate and relate to students	2%	0%	1%	10%	87%
Establishes a relationship between the family and the school, and keeps channels of communication open	1%	2%	11%	29%	56%
Sensitive to and respects students’ diverse cultural background	2%	3%	12%	26%	57%
Has passed license requirements mandated by the state	4%	6%	20%	25%	45%
Knows how to keep discipline and order in the classroom	1%	2%	8%	30%	59%
Knows how to meet the individualized learning needs of students	2%	1%	5%	21%	71%

Have you been asked to become involved in any of the following activities related to NCLB? (Please check all that apply)



Appendix B: State Hearing Information

NEW YORK

St. John's University, Manhattan Campus
September 29, 2005 • 5:30–8:30 PM

Local hearing partner: Campaign for Fiscal Equity, New York City

PARTICIPATING NEW YORK ORGANIZATIONS

National Center for Schools and Communities at Fordham University,
New York City

Good Schools for All, Buffalo

HEARING OFFICERS

Elise Boddie, Director, Education Group; NAACP Legal Defense and
Educational Fund, New York, NY

Amanda R. Broun, Senior Vice President, Public Education Network,
Washington, DC

Roscoe C. Brown, Jr., Executive Director, Center for Urban
Educational Policy; CUNY Graduate Center, New York, NY

Lee Daniels, Vice President, Research & Publications; National Urban
League, New York, NY

Fred Frelow, Director of Early College Initiatives, Woodrow Wilson
National Fellowship Foundation, Princeton, NJ

Michael Rebell, Executive Director and Counsel, Campaign for Fiscal
Equity, New York, NY

STUDENT WITNESSES

Terel Watson, Queens Vocational and Technical High School

Rebecca Berkman-Rivera, La Guardia High School

Margarita Henderson, EBC Bushwick High School

Abeo Richards, Democratic and Leadership School

Princess Taylor, Democratic and Leadership School

Marlowe Williams, New Rochelle High School

Elizabeth Slater, Bronx High School of Science

Nadiya Chadha, Bronx High School of Science

Tapasya Wanchu, Bronx High School of Science

Antonia Donato, St. Vincent Ferrer High School

PARENT WITNESSES

Victoria Bousquet

Carol Rogers

COMMUNITY WITNESSES

Wayne Ho, Executive Director, Coalition for Asian American
Children and Families

Jennifer Cowan, Program Specialist, The After-School Corporation

Kenneth D. Cohen, President, Northeast Queens Branch and
Education Chair, Metropolitan Council of New York State
Conference of NAACP Branches

Jan Atwell, Coordinator, New Yorkers for Smaller Class Size Coalition

ILLINOIS

Garfield Park Fieldhouse, Chicago, IL
November 17, 2005 • 4:00–7:00 PM

*Local hearing partner: Cross City Campaign for Urban School
Reform, Chicago, IL*

HEARING OFFICERS

Richard Guss, Student, Harlan High School, Chicago, IL

Wendy D. Puriefoy, President, Public Education Network,
Washington, DC

Ken Rolling, Executive Director, Parents for Public Schools,
Chicago, IL

Beth Swanson, Director, After School and Community School
Programs; Chicago Public Schools, Chicago, IL

Careda Taylor, Deputy Chief, High School Programs; Chicago Public
Schools, Chicago, IL

STUDENT WITNESSES

Maria Salgado, Senn High School

Michael McDowell, Austin High School

Terri Shields, Dyett High School

Brandi Jones, AASTA High School

PARENT WITNESSES

Chris Brown, Local School Council, Jones College Prep High School

Wanda Hopkins, Parents United for Responsible Education

Ana Cepeda, Funston Elementary School

COMMUNITY WITNESSES

Andrea Lee, Grand Boulevard Federation

Idida Perez, West Town Leadership United

Travis Stein, Neighborhood Capital Budget Group

Kathy Posner, Board Member, City Club of Chicago

Jim O'Neal, Civic Leader

Ken Farmer, Colorado College student on semester program in
Chicago

Alfred Rodgers, Neighborhood Capital Budget Group

John Paul Jones, Neighborhood Capital Budget Group

Julie Woestehoff, Parents United for Responsible Education

Wanda Evans, Purple Rain

Antoinette McMorris, Purple Rain

Sha Calhoun, TARGET Area Development Corporation

Samuel McDade, TARGET Area Development Corporation

Claudia Ingram, TARGET Area Development Corporation

Denis Ferguson, Chicago Commission on Human Relations

Eddie Brant, Student Teacher

J. E. Terrell, Garfield Boulevard Federation

Steven Evans, Just Us Fellas

OHIO

Columbus Africentric Early College • Columbus, OH

December 5, 2005 • 2:00–4:00 PM

Local hearing partner: KnowledgeWorks Foundation, Columbus, Ohio

HEARING OFFICERS

Ronald Cowell, President, Education Policy & Leadership Center, Harrisburg, PA

Jim Kohlmoos, President, National Education Knowledge Industry Association, Washington, DC

Emby Miller, Director, Education & Technology Training; Columbus Urban League, Columbus, OH

Terry K. Peterson, Senior Fellow, Education Policy and Partnerships; University of South Carolina Educational Foundation, Kiawah Island, SC

STUDENT WITNESSES

Tiffany Smith, Brookhaven Leadership Institute, Columbus

Jesrusa Clark, Dayton Early College Academy, Dayton

Sunita Denton, Marion-Franklin High School, Columbus

Alexandra Sanley, Brookhaven Leadership Institute, Columbus

Ashleigh Hart, School of Multiple Intelligences, Lima

Heather Loomis (*no school affiliation given*)

Dwayne (*no last name given*), Marion-Franklin High School, Columbus

Jasmine (*no last name given*), Dayton Early College Academy, Dayton

Lakita Williams, Brookhaven Leadership Institute, Columbus

Katrina Woods, Marion-Franklin High School, Columbus

Janesa McPherson, Columbus Africentric Early College, Columbus

Rachel Sanchez, Lorain Early College High School, Lorain

Travis Cushing, Lorain Early College High School, Lorain

Tarshay Dennard, School of Multiple Intelligences, Lima

Christian Colson, Dayton Early College Academy, Dayton

William Owens, School of Multiple Intelligences, Lima

Ryan Brown, Dayton Early College Academy, Dayton

PARENT WITNESSES

Bonita Johnson, Toledo

Laura Pryor, Toledo

Tammy Avila, Toledo

COMMUNITY WITNESSES

Claude Cliborne III, Public Affairs Manager, Sprint, Lima

Mary Cofer, Director of Diversity Culture, American Electric Power, Columbus

Eddie Harrell, Executive Director, Project GRAD, Columbus

Kent Friel, Cincinnati Citizens School Committee, Cincinnati

Bob Faulkner, Mahoning Valley Vision for Education

Norris Finley, Project Coordinator, Coalition for Quality Education, Toledo

Gary Williams, Director of Outreach, Washington State Community College, Marietta

Holly Fidler, Educator, Columbus

Eileen Cooper Reed, former Director, Children's Defense Fund, Cincinnati

Trisha Jackson, Academy of Creative Expression, East High Education Campus, Cleveland

Dexaray Porter, Academy of Creative Expression, East High Education Campus, Cleveland

PENNSYLVANIA

WQED Multimedia • Pittsburgh, PA

December 8, 2005 • 9:00 AM–NOON

Local hearing partner: Mon Valley Education Consortium, McKeesport, PA

PARTICIPATING PENNSYLVANIA ORGANIZATIONS

Lancaster Foundation for Educational Enrichment

Philadelphia Education Fund

HEARING OFFICERS

Amanda R. Broun, Senior Vice President, Public Education Network, Washington, DC

Ronald Cowell, President, Education Policy & Leadership Center, Harrisburg, PA

Linda Croushore, Executive Director, Mon Valley Education Consortium, McKeesport, PA

William Isler, President, Family Communications, Pittsburgh, PA

Geraldine Jones, Dean, California University of Pennsylvania, California, PA

Thomas Knight, Superintendent, East Allegheny School District, North Versailles, PA

Janis Risch, Acting Executive Director, Good Schools Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

P. Michael Sturla, Lancaster County Democratic Representative, Lancaster, PA

STUDENT WITNESSES

Students from the schools listed below gave testimony at the hearing

Allegheny County

Duquesne High School, Duquesne City School District

East Allegheny High School, East Allegheny School District

Forbes Road Career and Technology Center

McKeesport Area High School, McKeesport Area School District

Oliver High School, Pittsburgh Public Schools

Fayette County

Brownsville Area High School, Brownsville Area School District

Lancaster County

J.P. McCaskey High School, Lancaster School District

Northampton County

Liberty High School, Bethlehem Area School District

Philadelphia County/Philadelphia City

Benjamin Franklin High School

Dobbins Area Vocational-Technical High School

Germantown High School

Motivation High School

Samuel Fels High School

Thomas A. Edison High School

Creative and Performing Arts

Gamp High School

John Bartram School

Robert Lamberton High School

Simon Gratz High School

West Philadelphia High School

Washington E. Rhodes Middle School

FLORIDA

Academy for Teaching, Learning and Leadership, University of
Central Florida • Orlando, FL
December 14, 2005 • 4:00–7:30 PM

*Local hearing partner: Foundation for Orange County Public Schools,
Orlando, FL*

HEARING OFFICERS

Tobi L. Allen, Manager Community Relations, Lockheed Martin–
Central Florida, Orlando, FL

Ronald Cowell, President, Education Policy & Leadership Center,
Harrisburg, PA

J. Charles Gray, Founding Director, GrayRobinson Law Firm,
Orlando, FL

Latha Krishnaiyer, Past President, Florida PTA, Coral Springs, FL

Ada V. Rodriguez, Director, Developing Hispanic Leaders, Central
Florida YMCA, Orlando, FL

STUDENT WITNESSES

Ben Parker, Edgewater High School, Orlando

David Lopez, Jones High School, Orlando

PARENT WITNESSES

Ivette Mendoza, Hernando County

Santiago Fernandez, Orange County

Gladys Moreno, Hillsborough County

Gamal Mack, Orange County

COMMUNITY WITNESSES

Mark Havard, Human Resources Director, Hyatt Regency Grand
Cypress Hotel, Orlando

Christine Stilwell, Regional Coordinator, Informed Families/The
Florida Family Partnership, Orlando

Lisa Nason, VP, Communications & Organization Development,
Enterprise Florida, Orlando

Dorina Sackman, Teacher, Orange County

Conrad W. Marshall, Jr., Youth Worker, Orange County

Gregg Wiederer, Resident, Orange County

Tim Huth, Deputy Superintendent, Volusia County School Board
Margaret Gentile, Senior Director, Student Services, Orange County
Public Schools

Terri Steck, Parent, Orange County

Marjorie Murray, Special Projects & Title I Coordinator, Seminole
County Public Schools, Sanford

Tony Bland (*no affiliation given*)

Joie Cadle, Member, Orange County School Board

Molly Pival, Parent, Orange County

MASSACHUSETTS

YWCA Boston

January 11, 2006 • 4:00–7:30 PM

Local hearing partner: YWCA Boston

PARTICIPATING MASSACHUSETTS ORGANIZATION

Mary Lyon Foundation, Shelburne Falls, MA

HEARING OFFICERS

Charlotte Kahn, Director, The Boston Indicators Project, The Boston
Foundation, Boston, MA

Ellen Guiney, Executive Director, Boston Plan for Excellence in the
Public Schools, Boston, MA

Wendy D. Puriefoy, President, Public Education Network,
Washington, DC

Janet Helms, Director, Institute for the Study and Promotion of Race
and Culture; Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA

Peter Kiang, Director, Asian American Studies; University of
Massachusetts Boston, Boston, MA

STUDENT WITNESSES

Boston

Sonia Alves, Teen Empowerment

Julieann Dilbert, Boston Adult Technical Academy

Daisy Guerrero, John D. O'Bryant School for Math and Science

Jamal Hamilton, Middle School Academy

Emely Narvaez, Teen Empowerment

Ashley Periera, Boston Latin School

Damien Howard, Madison Park Technical Vocational High School
Shelburne Falls

Ally Footit, Mohawk Trail Regional School

Erin McCloud, Mohawk Trail Regional School

Amanda Schmidt, Mohawk Trail Regional School

Kirsten Singley, Mohawk Trail Regional School

Melanie Stevens, Mohawk Trail Regional School

PARENT WITNESSES

Caprice Taylor-Mendez, Boston Parent Organizing Network

Margaret Gilsenberg, Lowell Citywide Parent Council

Phala Chea, Lowell Parent Information Center, Lowell Public Schools

Leslie Lockhart, Help Line, Massachusetts Advocates for Children

Maria Gomes, Sociedad Latina, Boston Parent Organizing Network

Lucia Santana, Boston Parent Organizing Network

Colin Reilly, Parent, John D. O'Bryant School for Math and Science

Justin Langlois, Parent, New Bedford, MA

COMMUNITY WITNESSES

Michele Brooks, Boston School Committee and Transformative
Solutions

Daniel J. Losen, Civil Rights Project, Harvard University

Melissa Colón, Iniciativa, the Massachusetts Education Initiative for
Latino Students; Gaston Institute, Boston, MA

Linda Gerstle, Executive Director/CEO, Atlas Communities, Boston
Kathleen Boudy, Center for Law and Education, Boston

Laura Perille, Executive Director, EdVestors, Boston

Dianne Wilkerson, Senator, Massachusetts State Senate

Chu Ly, Asian Community Representative, Boston

Alexandra (*no last name given*), East Boston Economical Council

Madura Sociedad, Boston Parent Organizing Network

TEXAS

George Washington Carver Museum & Cultural Center Theater,
Austin, TX

January 12, 2006 • 4:00–7:30 PM

Local hearing partner: Austin Voices for Children and Youth

PARTICIPATING TEXAS ORGANIZATIONS

Houston A+ Challenge, Houston

Citizens Commission on Education Excellence, Austin

Texas Business and Education Coalition, Austin

HEARING OFFICERS

Tanny Berg, CEO, Jack Berg Sales, El Paso, TX

Ronald Cowell, President, Education Policy and Leadership Center,
Harrisburg, PA

Roberto Gonzalez, CEO, Employment & Training Centers, Inc.,
Houston, TX

Ann F. Utley, CEO, Textorder.com, Austin, TX

STUDENT WITNESSES

Darius Brewer, Austin

Andy Peterson, Springwoods High School, Austin

William Luton, Houston

Rachel Perez, Southwest Texas Junior College, Eagle Pass

Eric Graves, Bellaire High School, Houston

Donovan Bozan (*no school affiliation given*)

Manuel Lope, Cashmere Senior High School

PARENT WITNESSES

Cheryl Knockless, Austin

Diana Herrera, San Antonio

Linda Murray, Houston

Minerva Camarena Skeith, Austin

Lee Williams, Austin

Jose Guerrero, Austin

COMMUNITY WITNESSES

Angela Valenzuela, Education Committee Chair, Texas League of
United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Irving

Luis Figueroa, Staff Attorney, Mexican American Legal Defense and
Educational Fund (MALDEF), San Antonio

Anna Land, Vice President, Texas Afterschool Association, Austin

Ken Zornes, Deputy Executive Director, Texas Business & Education
Coalition, Austin

Daveta Daniels, Principal, Hartsfield Elementary School, Houston

Ted Melina Rabb, Texas Federation of Teachers, Austin

R.C. Polk, Retired Teacher, Austin

Kay Perry, Houston Area Alliance of High School Educators,
Houston

Carla Jones-Taylor, Instructor, Anderson Elementary School,
Houston

Linda McKenna, Teacher, Austin

Ginger Harrison, Executive Director, Citizens Commission on
Education Excellence, Corpus Christi

Benjamin Kramer, Assistant Principal, International High School,
Austin

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANTS

Lorenzo Sadun, Mathematics Professor, University of Texas

Cheryl Rose, Student, Austin

Todd Reznick, Former Teacher, Austin

Ashley, Member, Austin Voices for Education and Youth &
Communities in Schools

Lila Levinson, Parent

Veronica Delgado-Savage, youth professional

Jane Ross, Parent, Austin LBJ High School

Dennis Hartnett, Church Leader, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Helotes

Peter Nagy, Teacher, Houston

Pat Herndon (*no affiliation given*)

Margarita Guillen, Retired Teacher

Miguel Guajardo, Parent, Austin

CALIFORNIA

Koret Auditorium • San Francisco Public Library

January 18, 2006 • 4:00–7:30 PM

Local hearing partner: San Francisco Education Fund

PARTICIPATING CALIFORNIA ORGANIZATIONS

American Indian Child Resource Center

California PTA

California Tomorrow

Chinese for Affirmative Action/Center for Asian American Advocacy

Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth

East Bay Agency for Children

Greatschools.net

La Raza Centro Legal

NAACP, San Francisco Chapter

Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE)

Parents for Public Schools San Francisco

San Francisco Chamber of Commerce

HEARING OFFICERS

Henry Der, Senior Program Officer, Equality and Justice; Evelyn &
Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, San Francisco, CA

Carolyn M. Gettridge, Senior Vice President, Urban Development;
Voyager Expanded Learning, Lewisville, TX

Hydra Mendoza, Education Advisor, Office of the Mayor, San
Francisco, CA

William Miles, Director, Policy; Public Education Network,
Washington, DC

Lisa Villarreal, Program Officer, Education; San Francisco
Foundation, San Francisco, CA

STUDENT WITNESSES

Manor Demirjian, San Francisco Lowell High School

Roger Le, San Francisco Balboa High School

Leslye Lugo, San Francisco School of the Arts

Theresa Muehlbauer, San Francisco School of the Arts

Omar Sandoval, Oasis High School, Oakland

PARENT WITNESSES

María Lucero Padilla, Berkeley Unified School District

Lateefah Simon, San Francisco Unified School District

Kim Shipp, Oakland Unified School District

Todd Wanerman, San Francisco Unified School District

COMMUNITY WITNESSES

Russlynn Ali, Director, The Education Trust – West

H. Nhi Chau, Executive Director, Oakland Asian Student
Educational Services

Dr. Linda Shore, Director, Teacher Institute; Exploratorium
Christina Wong, Policy Advocate, Chinese for Affirmative Action,
Center on Asian American Advocacy

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Eric Mar, Commissioner/Past President, San Francisco Board of
Education

Monique Dollonne, Parent Trainer/Community Leader & Organizer,
Committee for Accountability in Education, San Francisco

Zara Rivera, Josefina Nataly Gutierrez Simenez, Fanny Sola,
Students, Richmond High School

Darlene Brady, San Francisco Unified School District

AUDIENCE PARTICIPANTS

Mary Jane Mikuriya, former USOE Title I Program Consultant, San
Francisco

Kevin Brown, Youth Together, Oakland

Ember Cook, COLAGE/Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere,
San Francisco

Dan Brady, Teacher, San Francisco

Sandra Halladey, Founder/Associate Director, Parents for Public
Schools, San Francisco

Tracey Inglehart, Teacher, San Francisco

Cindy Choy, Parents for Public Schools

Jonah Zern, Teacher, Oakland

Linda Tung, Chair, Community Advisory Committee for Special
Education, San Francisco

Erwin Morton, Parent, Palo Alto

Joy Kutakak-Kennedy, Teacher Prep Specialist, National University

Ken Songco, Associate Director, AACE Talent Search, Japanese
Community Youth Council

Lorraine Woodruff-Long, Executive Director, Parents for Public
Schools, San Francisco

Michael Berg, Board Member, San Francisco Education Fund

Tari Kani, Public Advocates, Inc., San Francisco

Judy Goddess, Former President, California Association of
Compensatory Education, San Francisco

Brian Brackney, San Francisco

Jennifer Cano, Community Educational Services, San Francisco

Maureen Sullivan, Teacher, Fairmont Elementary School, San
Francisco

Gail Ow, San Francisco

Frank Rosenberg, San Francisco

Sharon Bleviss, Teacher, Cappuccino High School, San Bruno

Jun Ling Ye, Chinese Affirmative Association

Jake (*no last name given*), Student, Washington High School

MICHIGAN

Fellowship Chapel Village • Detroit, MI

January 27, 2006 • 2:00–4:00 PM

Local Hearing Partner: Youth Sports and Recreation Commission,
Detroit, MI

HEARING OFFICERS

Tonya Allen, Program Director; Skillman Foundation, Detroit, MI
Reginald M. Felton, Director, Federal Relations; National School
Boards Association, Alexandria, VA

Henry L. McClendon, Jr., Director, Youth Development; New
Detroit, Inc., Detroit, MI

Guitele Nicoleau, Director, Research & Member Development;
Public Education Network, Washington, DC

Judy Y. Samelson, Advocacy in Action, Flint, MI

STUDENT WITNESSES

Kamilia Landnem, Cass Technical High School

D'Ante Whitney, Detroit Academy of Arts and Sciences

Brittany Rogers, Detroit Academy of Arts and Sciences

James Moody, Detroit Academy of Arts and Sciences

Latashia Shaw, Detroit Academy of Arts and Sciences

PARENT WITNESSES

Dorene Smith Bey, After-School Consultant, Detroit Parent Network,

Terrance Collier, Local School Community Organization President,
Coolidge Elementary School

Iris Essex, Parent/Mentor

Brian Love, Legislative Assistant, Office of State Senator Martha Scott

Nancy Coley, Detroit Planning Commission

Lynn Smith, Teacher, Southeastern High School

Bedriya Sabree, Acting Executive Director, Grants Procurement,
Local, State and Federal Programs; Detroit Public Schools

Karen Martin, Parent/Community Advocate

Laverne Hughes (*no affiliation given*)

Aurelia Brown (*no affiliation given*)

COMMUNITY WITNESSES

Sharon Clayton Peters, President, Michigan's Children

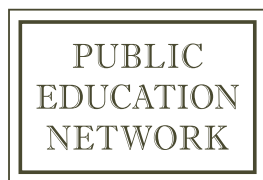
Charlie Anderson, Executive Director, Communities in Schools

Harrison Blackmond, President & CEO, Black Alliance for
Educational Options – Detroit Chapter

Reginald Turner, Member, Michigan Board of Education

Charise Mauricette, Teacher, Detroit Academy of Arts and Sciences

Deborah Omokehinde, former Community Liaison, Detroit Public
Schools



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